

PANHANDLE HOME HEALTH

A Division of the Panhandle Health District

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Mission

To provide compassionate, caring services that enhance the quality of life and the independent function of the residents with home health needs in the five northern counties of Idaho.

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Panhandle Health District
8500 N. Atlas Rd.
Hayden, ID 83835
208-415-5160
Www.phd1.idaho.gov

Restoring Independence

Dee Ross wasn't happy when Laurie Stafford, her physical therapist, made her last home visit.

"I'll miss her," Dee said, trying to pout while she showed off how well she could walk with her walker. "With Laurie's help, I finally got out of the house by myself."

Laurie is one of the eight therapists in the Panhandle Health District's (PHD) Home Health program. Home Health provides therapists to homebound patients in the five northern counties upon a doctor's order. Depending on a patient's location, physical, occupational and speech therapists are available through the PHD program.

Patients referred by their doctor to PHD for Home Health services are working toward independence. A Home Health nurse starts off every new patient with an in-depth assessment that sometimes uncovers needs of which the doctor is unaware. Nurses share their findings and a suggested plan of care with their patient's doctor.

This practice leads to good patient results, according to Medicare. Only 23 percent of PHD Home Health patients are admitted to a hospital compared to a national average of 29 percent.

Doctors order therapists to help Home Health patients regain control of their lives after surgery, strokes or illness. In a recent patient satisfaction survey, PHD's therapists received the highest marks possible.

After Dee had surgery, Laurie visited her three times each week for months. She exercised Dee and taught her exercises to do on her own. Laurie taught Dee to pick herself up after a fall and use a walker to get around her house.

After 19 years as a licensed physical therapist, Laurie is passionate about her



Physical Therapist Laurie Stafford and patient Dee Ross

work.

"I like helping my patients get back their independence. It means so much to them and so much to me that I can help get them there," she said.

PHD's therapists assess patient progress constantly. They share their findings with their patients' families, caregivers and doctors. Patients set their own goals and therapists help them work to achieve them. Dee wanted her mobility back and Laurie helped her regain it.

Laurie taught Dee how to breathe and pace herself for energy efficiency. Dee was proud of her achievements, but success ended Laurie's visits.

"Those few months went by so fast," Dee said.

For information on PHD's Home Health program, visit www.phd1.idaho.gov or call (208) 415-5160.

Panhandle Home Health

Enriching Lives

More than 30 Senior Companions were honored by the Panhandle Health District recently for devoting more than five years each to enriching the lives of adults less fortunate than they are.

Senior Companions are age 60 and older and in good health. They volunteer to help people—primarily other seniors—in their communities with simple chores, such as grocery shopping and transportation, to enable them to continue living at home. The program is coordinated through the Home Health division of the Panhandle Health District and covers Idaho's five northern counties.

Olive Nelson of Hayden received a special award for her Senior Companion work. Olive has volunteered as a Senior Companion for 25 years. She says the benefits for volunteers are as great as they are for recipients.

"When I get old," she said, pausing to chuckle, "I would like someone to come into my home and say hello and how are you. That would make my day. There but for the grace of God go I."

The 81 Senior Companions in the five northern counties gave 64,064 hours of service to the program in 2008. They traveled 144,321 miles throughout the year to help 347 clients and provide respite to 89 caregivers.

The Senior Companion program offers stipends to volunteers if their income puts them 25 percent or less over poverty level.

"We have very few who don't get stipends," said Tami Johnson, program coordinator. "These people are



Senior Companion Awards Luncheon 2008

pretty phenomenal. They themselves are struggling in the community, but they're there for others."

George Holcomb of Rathdrum has volunteered as a Senior Companion for seven years. He's a veteran of the Korean War and a former aircraft mechanic and is often matched with people with similar backgrounds.

"They're desperate for someone to talk to who understands," Holcomb said. "One client and I flew the same type of aircraft in the Navy. We swap war stories. He loves it and so do I. It's very rewarding."

People wanting Senior Companion volunteers outnumber the volunteers. Volunteers are always welcome. People eligible to be Senior Companions are older than 60, have a limited income, can volunteer 20 hours each week and love to help their neighbors.

Volunteers receive trainings, a physical exam, supplemental insurance, help with meal and transportation costs, a small stipend if they qualify and the joy of helping others live on their own.

For a Senior Companion volunteer form, visit www.phd1.idaho.gov or call Tami Johnson at (208) 415-5177.

Meet Our Skilled Home Health Staff



Joyce Sierk Bergen is a registered and licensed dietitian with PHD's Home Health program. She provides doctor-ordered medical nutrition therapy to clients.

Joyce screens clients to assess nutrition needs and plan follow-up. She provides individualized nutrition instruction, meal planning assistance, monitoring, documentation, follow-up care and referrals. For example, Joyce explains how the food you eat affects blood glucose levels if you are a diabetic. She helps patients set short and long-term goals to achieve better blood glucose control. She may suggest follow-up with a certified diabetic educator after discharge from Home Health.

Joyce also consults with and educates the Home

Home Care Extends Life

Studies by schools of nursing and governmental agencies have established beyond a doubt that home care extends longevity. Visits by home care personnel help people spiritually as well as medically.

(from **21 Reasons Home Care Still Pays**)

Health staff about a patient's nutritional needs.

"Home Health clients are often recovering from illness or surgery or living with a chronic disease, all of which can lead to weight loss from lack of appetite," Joyce says. "I teach them to increase food intake to benefit their health."

